

## Against the Grain

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# Publisher Profile-Grey House Publishing

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**LM:** It varies from transaction to transaction. Right now we have three different models. In one case, all we have is print rights, no sales access to the online. In another, we helped build a better online model and sell both print and electronic, with the electronic sales now representing close to thirty percent of revenues. And in the third, we have rights to sell eBook and online versions of specific titles, but not the entire database.

**ATG:** *You do seem committed to online editions of your own directories via GOLD (Grey House Online Databases), and many of your reference books are available from eBook vendors. When did you start making your directories and reference works available digitally? Are they all available via mobile devices?*

**LM:** Our first title, the *Directory of Mail Order Catalogs*, was picked up by **Dialog** in the early '80s. And we have always sold subsets of the directory records to industry buyers. Our own launch of our online database products was in 2005. And **Gale Virtual Reference Library** was the first major eBook vendor of our reference titles and remains the most successful.

**Grey House Publishing Canada's** directory products, the most important reference tools in Canada (including the 166-year-old *Canadian Almanac*), are available via our **CIRC (Canadian Information Resource Center)** product, and have a significant electronic revenue component. The **CIRC** content is available on mobile devices.

**ATG:** *How has the digital age changed you approach to reference publishing?*

**LM:** It hasn't.

**ATG:** *As we move into this digital environment some publishers have expressed concerns about piracy. Has Grey House experienced problems with online editions of your resources appearing on piracy sites?*

against the grain  
publisher profile



## Grey House Publishing

4919, Route 22, Armenia, NY 12501  
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Fax: (518) 789-0556 • [www.greyhouse.com](http://www.greyhouse.com)

**OFFICERS:** Richard Gottlieb, President; Leslie MacKenzie, Publisher.

**AFFILIATED IMPRINTS:** Grey House; Salem Press; H.W. Wilson; Universal Reference; Bowker; Sedgwick Press; Street Rating Guides; Weiss Rating Guides; Grey House Publishing Canada.

**KEY PRODUCTS AND SERVICES:** Industry Directories and Databases; General Reference; Health and Education, Statistics and Demographics; and Online Databases.

**CORE MARKETS/CLIENTELE:** High School/Public/Academic Libraries; Vertical Industry Segments.

**NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES:** 70

**NUMBER OF BOOKS PUBLISHED ANNUALLY:** 70

**HISTORY AND BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF YOUR COMPANY/PUBLISHING PROGRAM:** See accompanying interview with Grey House publisher, Leslie MacKenzie. 🐾

**LM:** We have not seen any egregious examples of piracy of our IP. If any of your readers come across it, please let us know.

**ATG:** *Is there a sustainable product mix that includes print and digital for a reference publisher like Grey House? Or will digital products become the dominant provider of income stream? If so, how is Grey House preparing for it? If not, what makes you think there is a future for print?*

**LM:** Our business model is based on print. If there is a secondary electronic revenue stream, God Bless. **Wikipedia** and **Google** have effectively destroyed the general encyclopedia market (a moment of silence for the late and lamented **Brockhaus**, the wonderful German print encyclopedia.). But there is still a substantial market and opportunity for tightly focused, in-depth, high-quality, print reference works, with an electronic component.

**ATG:** *With all that is going on at Grey House how do you make time to relax? And when you do, how do you spend your time? Do you have any favorite activities or any special interests?*

**LM:** In our spare time we raised three children — now young adults, and restored a 1780 home. I've sat on a number of Town and Charitable Boards. I still enjoy running and gardening. **Dick** spent twenty years as a volunteer fire department paramedic (ret'd), and is currently a Town Constable and Justice of the Peace (there is a librarian discount on weddings).

**ATG:** *We wish we had more time to talk. We've really enjoyed our conversation and have learned a lot. Thanks for making room in your schedule to speak with us.*

**LM:** Thanks a lot. It's been fun. 🐾

on in my collecting career. I have to have an interest in the contents and go for looks and the completion of sets. For my 21st birthday somebody gave me a partial set of miniature volumes of **Shakespeare**. Originally issued on a weekly basis with a newspaper this set, in its own bookcase, took me about 15 years to complete, and now I am working on a second incomplete set in a different binding. I used to stick to a price limit, but nowadays I push myself higher if I see something I really like, and prices have also gone up considerably. I also buy newly-published small books if they are attractive enough, but for the most

part I avoid religious works, dictionaries and the like, which are frequently produced in small sizes. My favourites vary, but last year I enjoyed the *Olympic Oath*, which I have in a really tiny version. I have a lovely miniature book bound in white vellum called *Minibibliophilia* which describes some of the books I have, and others I aspire to collect. Most of my collection is 19th or 20th century. Sometimes I weed the collection by size!

**ATG:** *How would you advise someone interested in starting their own miniature book collection? Are there specific publications they should read or Websites they should explore?*

**EAC:** Haunting secondhand bookshops used to be the order of the day, but if you don't

want to stir from your desktop I suppose you could collect online, but really it's not the same. There is a *Miniature Book Society*, but I am not a member. I recommend looking at **Louis Bondy's** *Miniature books for a start*. **Bondy** was a specialist book dealer who I was lucky enough to meet many years ago, and his book is still useful. More recently you could look at the exhibition catalogue from the *Grolier Club* called *Miniature Books: 4,000 Years of Tiny Treasures*. Looks like there will always be scope for me to collect.

**ATG:** *Thank you so much for talking to us today. We enjoyed it and really learned a lot.*

**EAC:** Thank you, it's been a pleasure. 🐾